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Education and Work, Australia

Survey data over time on current or recent study, educational attainment, and employment

Reference period May 2020

Released 11/11/2020

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Key statistics

In May 2020:

- 63% of people aged 15-64 were fully engaged in work and/or study (was 66% in 2019)
- 18% of men and 20% of women aged 15-64 were studying
- 69% aged 20-64 had a non-school qualification, with women (70%) now overtaking men (68%)
- 74% of 15-74 year olds with a qualification were employed

Impacts on the survey

The Survey of Education and Work (SEW) was run during the first two weeks of May (3 May to 16 May) as part of the Monthly Population Survey (MPS).

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, various restrictions were in place at this time, which are likely to have impacted the survey results.

Initiatives to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 and support the economy included international travel restrictions, border control measures for some states and territories, shutting down of non-essential services, economic stimulus packages, free childcare for working parents, and social distancing rules.

In particular, international travel restrictions and the impact on net overseas migration resulted in decreases in some key sub-populations of the survey (for example, the number of people currently studying for a non-school qualification).

Care should be taken when comparing SEW 2020 data with results from previous survey years, particularly for populations that are likely to have been impacted by COVID-19.

See [Methodology \(https://www.abs.gov.au/methodologies/education-and-work-australia-methodology/may-2020\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/methodologies/education-and-work-australia-methodology/may-2020) and [Labour Force, Australia, May 2020 \(https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia/may-2020\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia/may-2020) for more information on the impact of COVID-19 on SEW 2020.

Engagement in employment and/or education

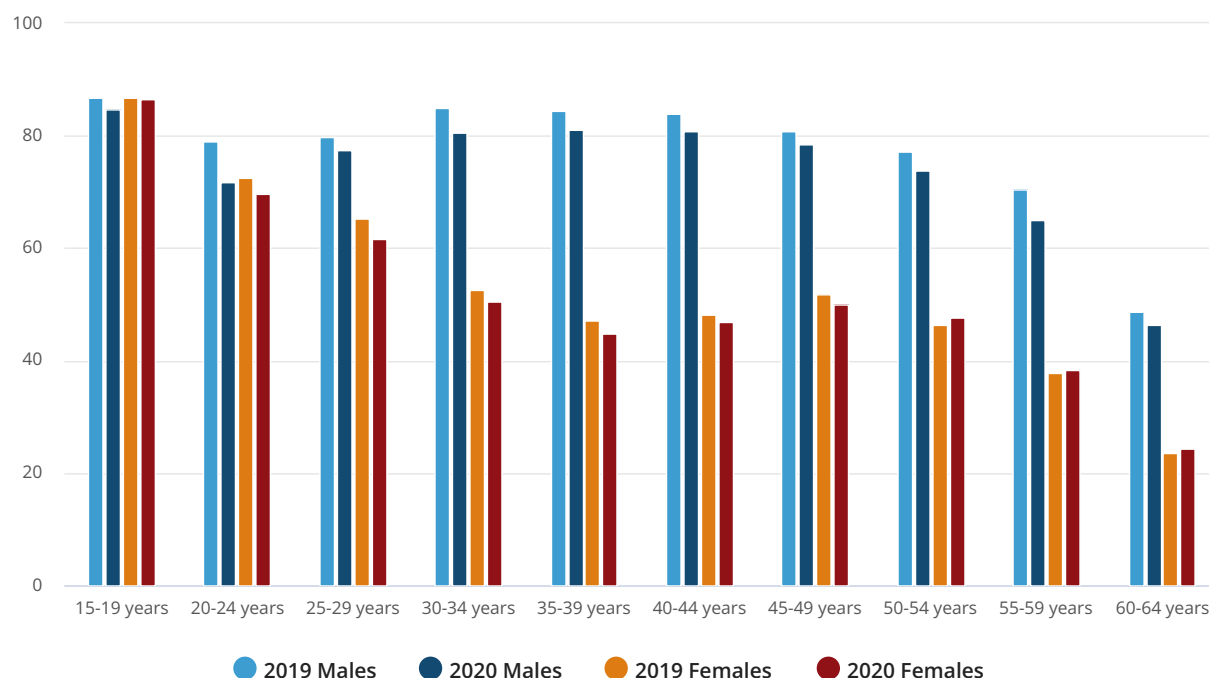
In May 2020, four in five Australians aged 15-64 years were either fully or partially engaged in work and/or study (80% or 13.2 million people).

Including people still at school, almost two-thirds (63%) were fully engaged (that is, working full-time, studying full-time, or both working and studying). This compares with 66% for the same time last year (May 2019).

Overall, it was more common for men (75%) than women (52%) to be fully engaged, however rates for young men and women were similar (85% and 87% respectively for those aged 15-19 years, and 72% and 70% for those aged 20-24 years).

There was a decrease across the younger age groups in the number of people who were fully engaged in 2020, but this was most prominent for men aged 20-24 (72% fully engaged in May 2020 compared with 79% in May 2019). The drop in the rates of full engagement for young men aged 20-24 was primarily driven by a drop in full time employment, with 42% of young men this age engaged through full-time employment in 2020, down from 46% in 2019.

1. Fully engaged in work and/or study, by sex and age, 2019-2020(a)



(a) All persons aged 15-64.

Source: Education and Work, Australia, 2020, Table 32

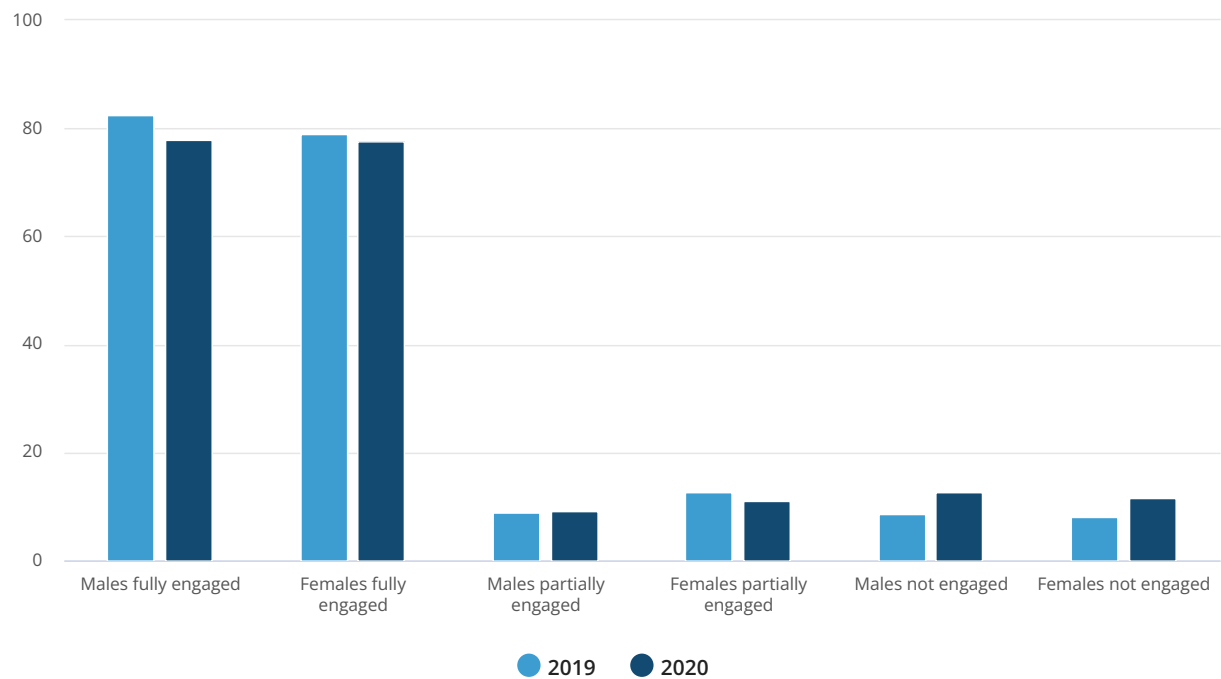
The decrease in full engagement was seen across all states and territories, with similar changes occurring in Victoria (64% in 2020 compared with 67% in 2019); Queensland (62% in 2020 compared with 65% in 2019); Western Australia (63% in 2020 compared with 66% in 2019); and New South Wales (64% in 2020 compared with 67% in 2019).

Engagement of young Australians

Most young Australians aged 15-24 years were doing at least some work or study, or a combination of both (88% or 2.8 million people). Around 78% were fully engaged in work and/or study (including those still in school), and a further 10% were partially engaged (part-time work or study).

However, proportions of young people who were not engaged in any employment or study increased in 2020 (12% compared with 8% in 2019).

2: Engagement of young people in employment and/or study, by sex, 2019-2020(a)

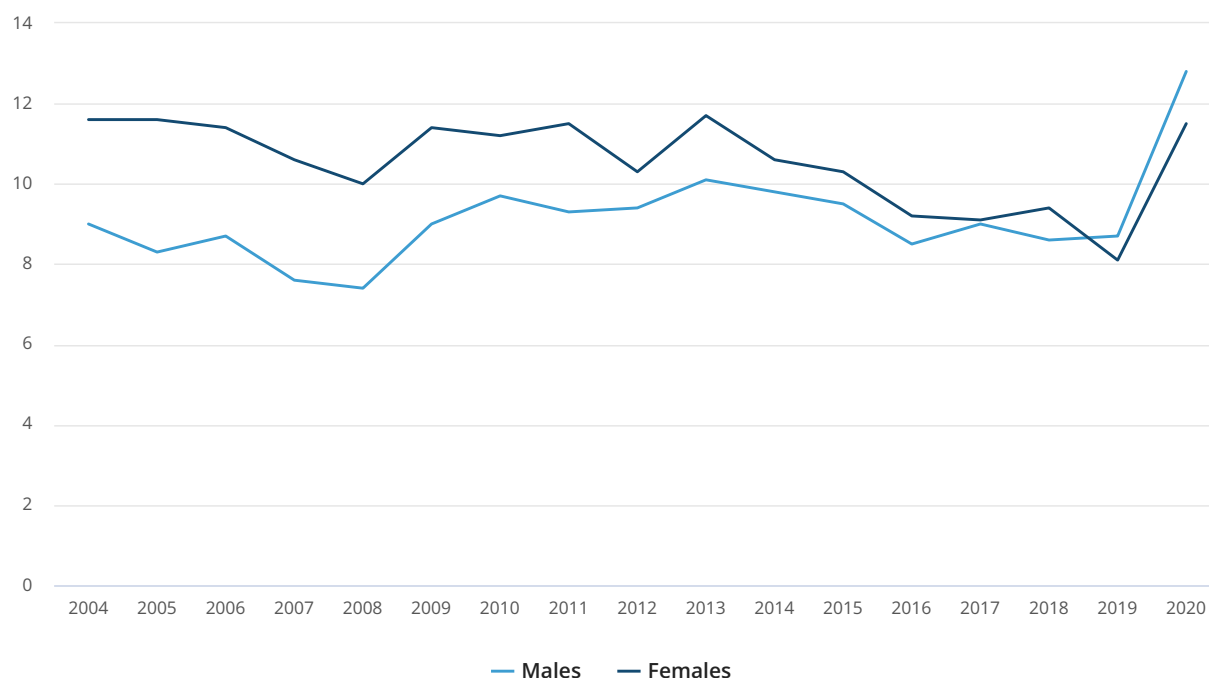


(a) All persons aged 15-24.

Source: Education and Work, Australia, 2020, Table 34

More young men were not working or studying in May 2020 (13%) than at any point since the beginning of the time series in 2004.

3: Proportion of young people not engaged in any employment or study, by sex, 2004-2020(a)



(a) All persons aged 15-24.

Source: Education and Work, Australia, 2020, Table 34

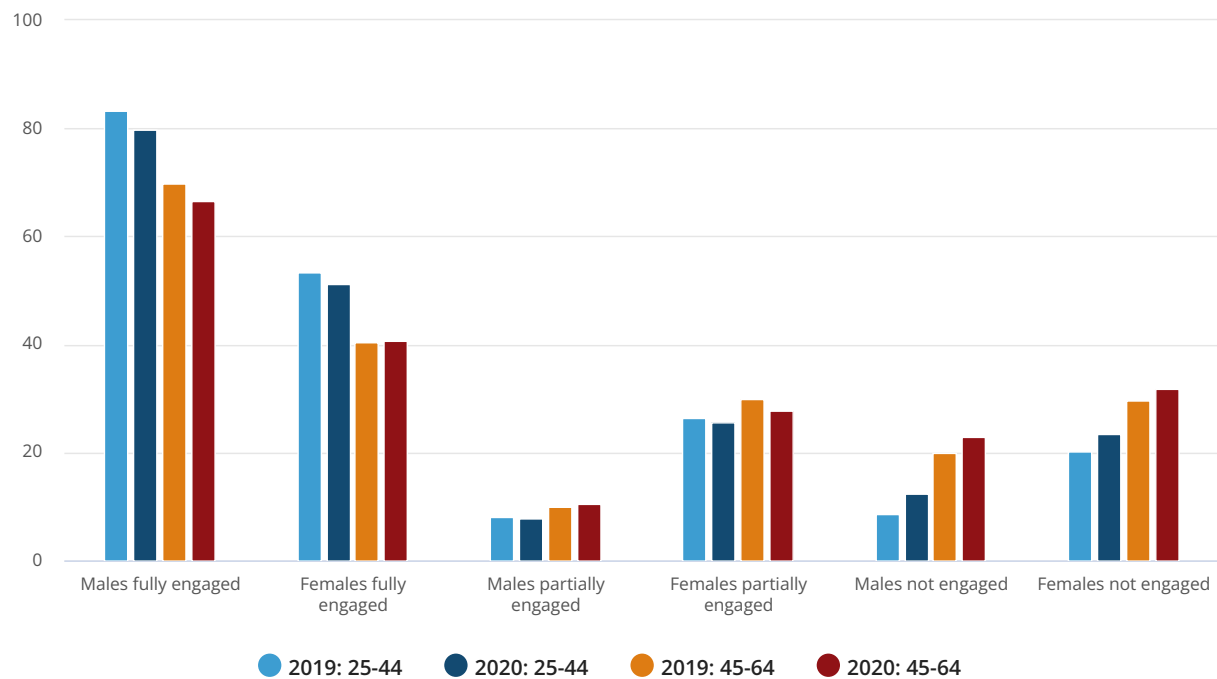
Engagement of people aged 25 to 64 years

There was also a decrease in engagement for Australians aged 25-64 years but it was not as marked as that of younger people. Around 53% of people aged 45-64 years were fully engaged in work and/or study in 2020, compared with 55% at the same time last year. This change was also largely owing to a drop in full-time employment for men. 66% of men aged 45-64 were primarily engaged in full-time employment in May 2020, compared with 69% in 2019.

There was a drop in partial engagement for women aged 45-64, from 30% in 2019 to 28% in 2020.

28% of people aged 45-64 were not doing any work or study in 2020, compared with 25% at the same time last year. For 25-44 year olds, this was 18% and 14% respectively.

4: Engagement of people aged 25-64 in work and/or study, by sex and age, 2019-2020(a)



(a) All persons aged 25-64.

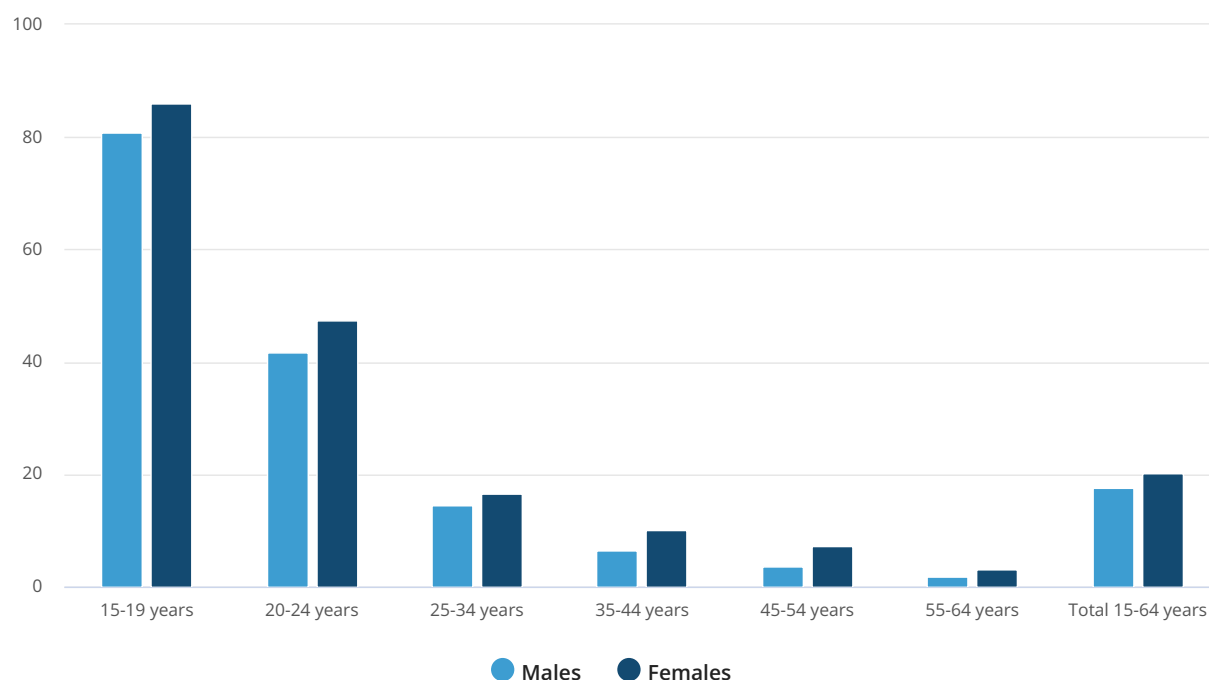
Source: Education and Work, Australia, 2020, Customised data

Current study

Enrolled in study

Overall, 18% of men and 20% of women aged 15-64 years were enrolled in study in May 2020, with 12% and 15% respectively studying for a non-school qualification (a certificate, diploma or degree), and the remainder enrolled in school. The proportion enrolled in May 2020 was very similar to May 2019 (18% of men and 21% of women).

5: Currently enrolled in study, by sex and age, 2020(a)



(a) All persons aged 15-64.

Source: Education and Work, Australia, 2020, Customised data

Around 1.4 million people were studying at higher education institutions, while 475,000 were studying at technical and further education (TAFE) institutions. Just over two-thirds of current students (68%) were studying full-time.

One in two students (50%) were also employed, compared with 59% in May 2019 (a drop of 283,000 people).

Currently studying for a non-school qualification

In 2020, 40% of people aged 15-64 years who were studying for a non-school qualification were doing bachelor degrees, while 18% were doing post-graduate studies (including graduate diplomas and graduate certificates), and 19% were studying for a certificate III or IV.

57% of people studying for a bachelor degree or above were women. Women also made up

53% of people currently studying for a certificate, diploma or advanced diploma.

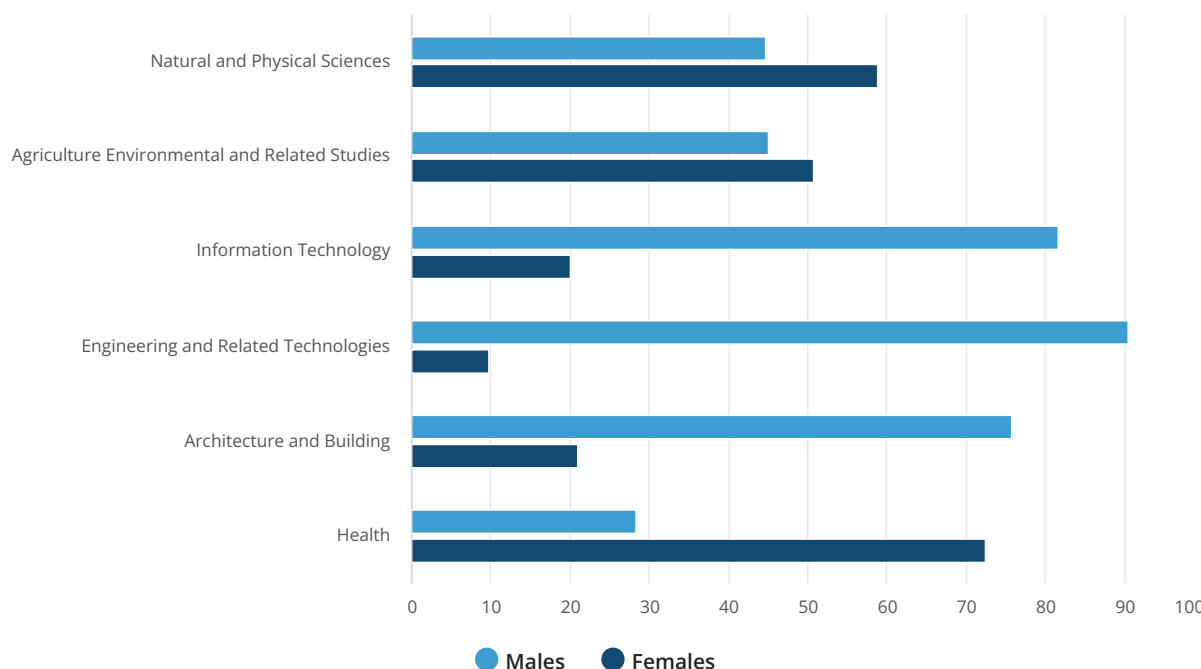
Overall, 12 per cent of people aged 15-64 were studying for a certificate III or above, down from 13 per cent in May 2019. This decrease was particularly noticeable for 20-24 year olds (41 per cent compared with 44 per cent in 2019, a drop of 66,100 students).

The most popular fields of non-school study for women were Society and culture (28%), Management and commerce (19%), and Health (19%). For men, these were Management and commerce (23%), Engineering and related technologies (17%), and Society and culture (15%).

Around 445,100 people were studying science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM) fields in 2020, with 72% of these students being men.

A further 450,000 people were studying the STEM-related fields of Architecture and building, and Health. While Architecture and building students reflected the gender split of students in STEM fields (76% men, 21% women), this was reversed for Health students, where 73% were women.

6. Currently studying in a STEM or STEM-related field, by sex, 2020(a)(b)



(a) Persons aged 15-64 currently studying for a non-school qualification in a STEM or STEM-related field.

(b) Refer to the glossary for more detail on STEM and STEM-related fields.

(c) Natural and Physical Sciences includes Mathematics.

Source: Education and Work, Australia, 2020, Customised data

Younger students (aged 15-24 years)

Around 63% or 2 million young people aged 15-24 years were currently studying (including school students), with 1 million of them studying for a certificate III or above.

More young women were studying at higher education institutions such as universities (46% compared with 38% of young men), while more young men were studying at TAFE institutions (13% compared with 7% of young women).

22% of school students were undertaking vocational education and training (VET) as part of their school studies (23% of male students and 20% of female students).

School leavers

There were 271,000 people aged 15 to 20 years who were enrolled in secondary school in 2019 but not enrolled in May 2020. Just over four in five of these school leavers (81%) had completed year 12 or equivalent, and 60% were currently enrolled in further study, which is almost the same as 2019 (81% and 59% respectively).

Of the school leavers who were not studying, 48% were not employed in May 2020, 34% were employed part-time and 20% were employed full-time.

Apprentices and trainees

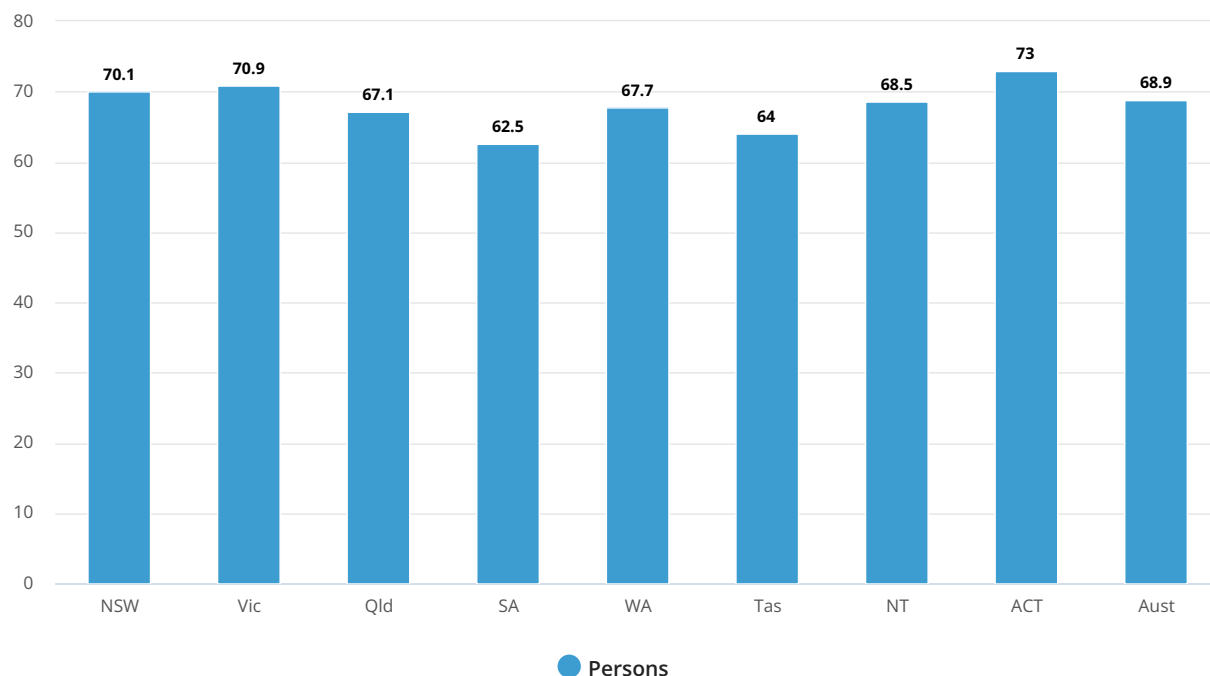
In May 2020, there were 192,400 people aged 15 to 64 years who were employed as apprentices or trainees, of whom the majority were male (85%).

Around 43% (82,800 people) had started their apprenticeship or traineeship in the last 12 months. Most apprentices and trainees were born in Australia (87%), and nearly two-fifths (59%) were located in capital cities.

Non-school qualifications

In 2020, over two-thirds of Australians aged 20-64 years (69% or 10.4 million people) had a non-school qualification (a certificate, diploma or degree).

7: Non-school qualifications, by state/territory, 2020(a)

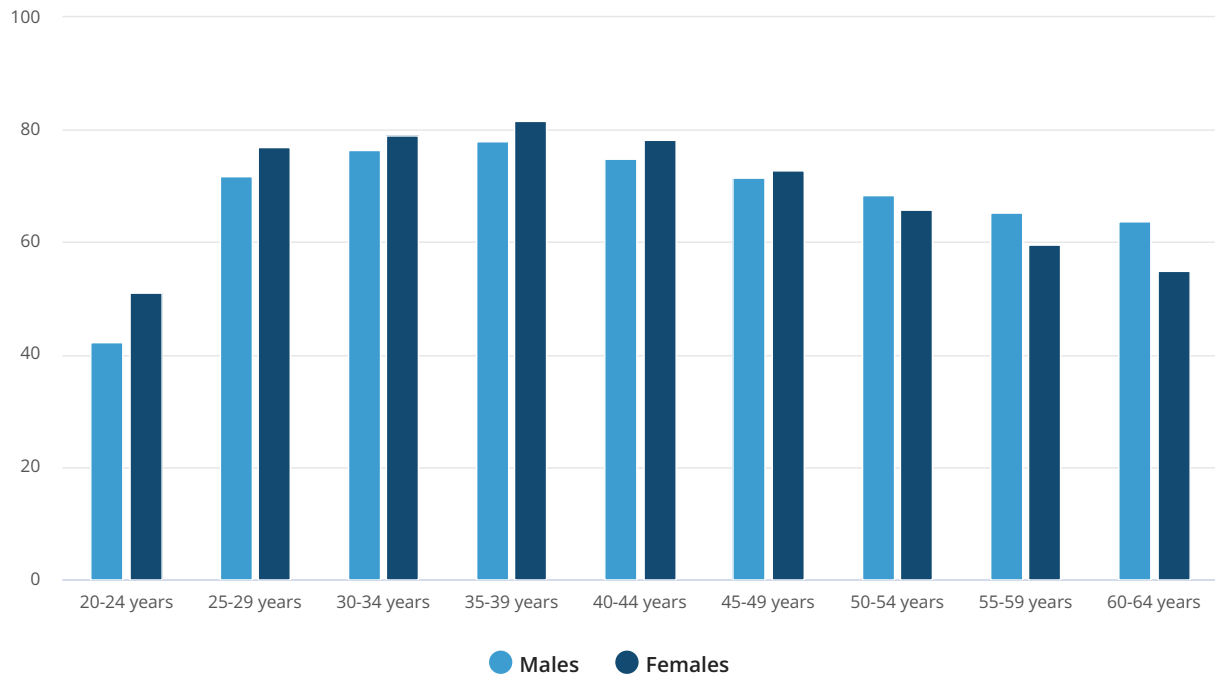


(a) All persons aged 20-64 years.

Source: Education and Work, Australia, 2020, Table 24

In the older age groups (50-64 year olds), men were more likely to have non-school qualifications than women (66% compared with 60%), however this was reversed for younger men and women aged 20-49 years (69% and 74% respectively).

8: Non-school qualifications, by sex and age(a)

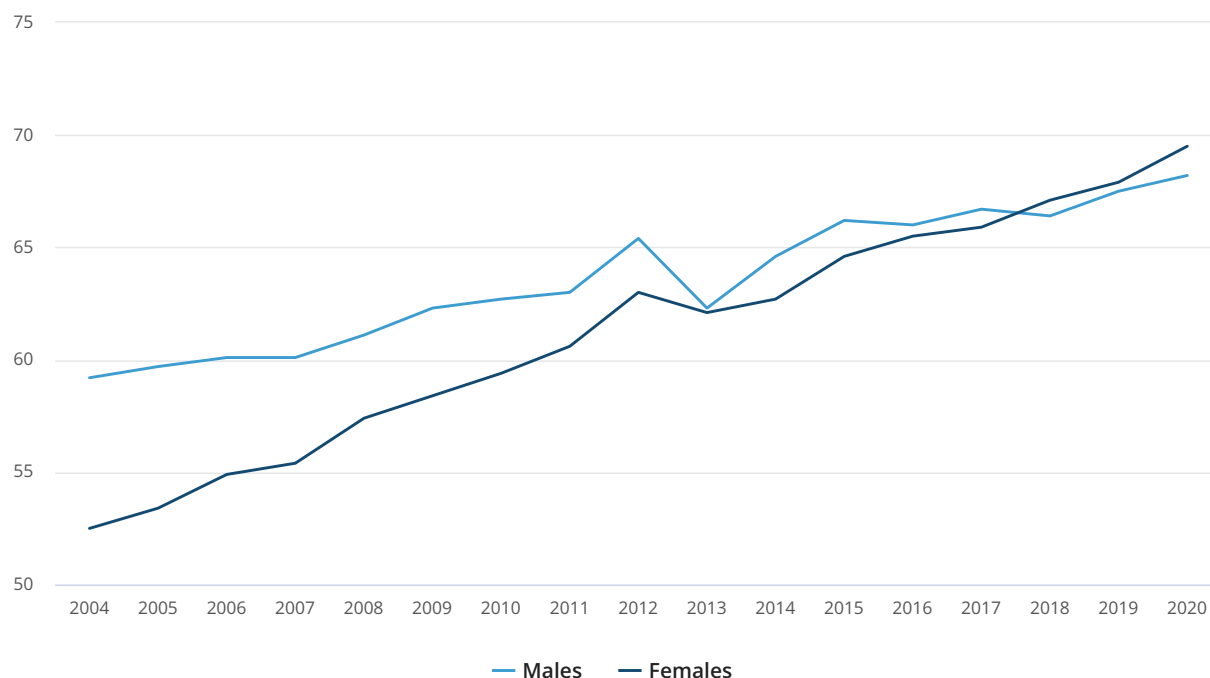


(a) All persons aged 20-64 years.

Source: Education and Work, Australia, 2020, Table 24

The gap in attainment between men and women aged 20-64 years has been steadily narrowing over time, to the point where proportionally more women (70%) than men (68%) now have a non-school qualification.

9: Non-school qualifications, by sex, 2004-2020(a)



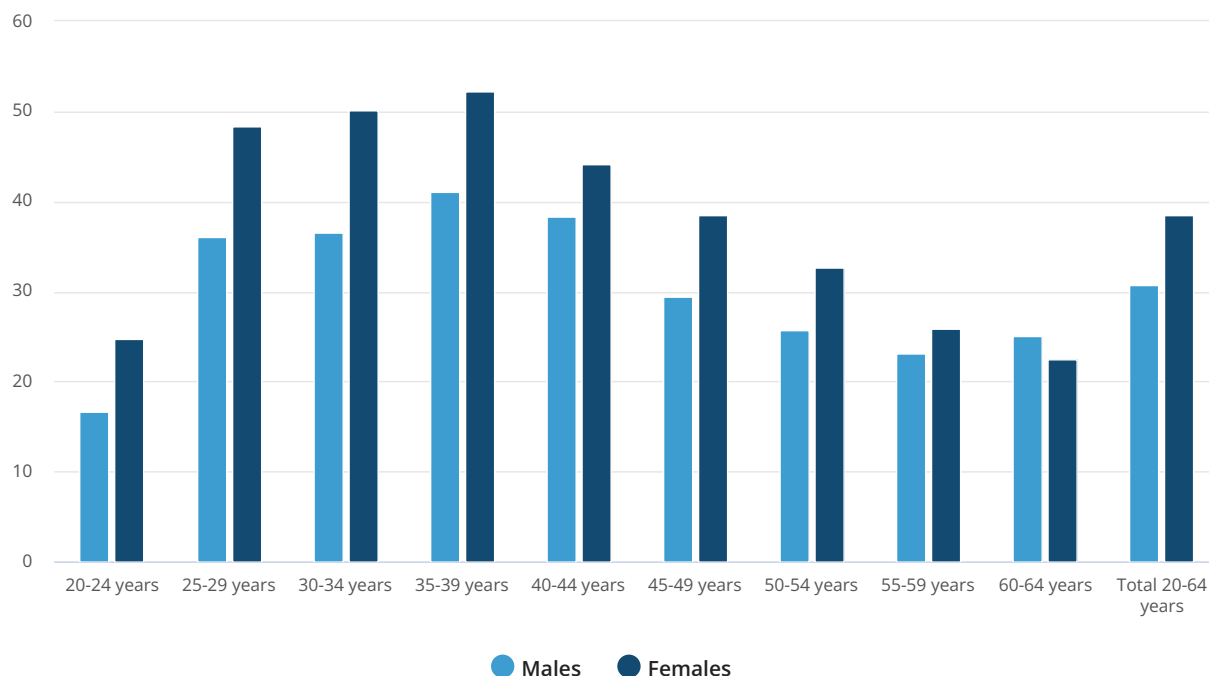
(a) All persons aged 20-64 years.

Source: Education and Work, Australia, 2020, Table 24

Attainment by level and field

35% of Australians aged 20-64 years had a bachelor degree or above. Women were more likely to have qualifications at this level than men (39% compared with 31%).

10: Bachelor degree or above, by sex and age(a)

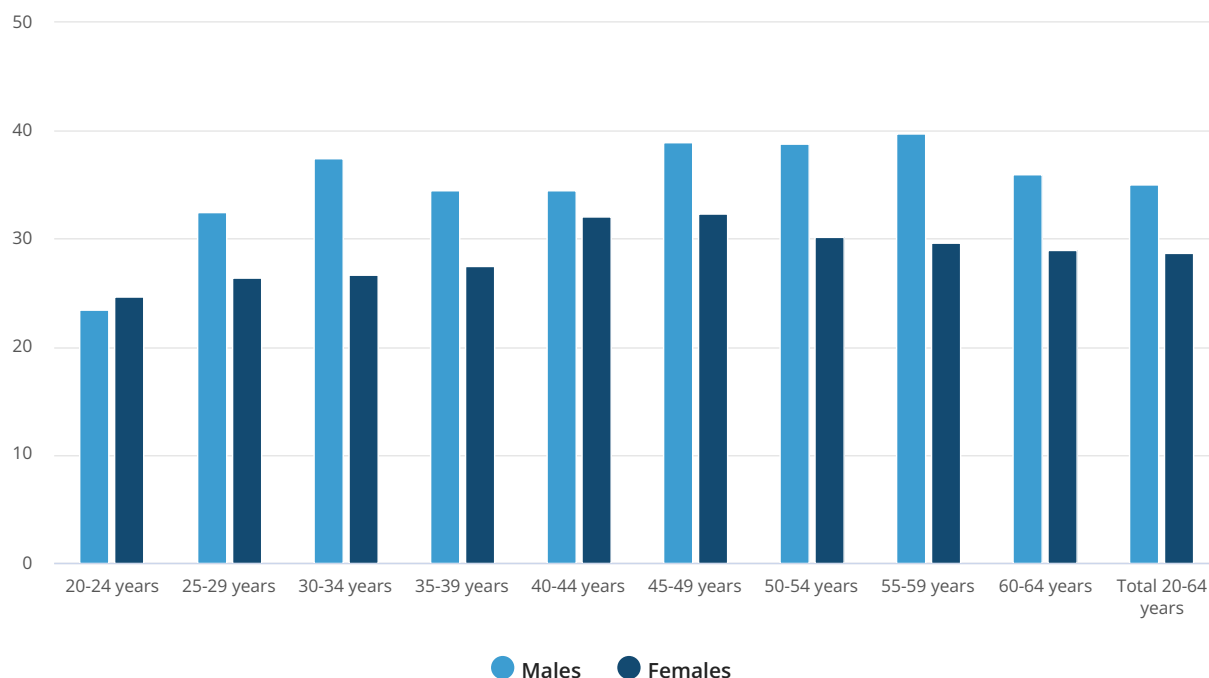


(a) All persons aged 20-64 years.

Source: Education and Work, Australia, 2020, Table 26

Around 32% had a qualification below bachelor degree level (a certificate, diploma or advanced diploma) as their highest qualification. Overall, this was more likely to be the case for men (35%) than women (29%), however proportions for those under 25 years were closer together.

11: Certificate, diploma or advanced diploma, by sex and age(a)



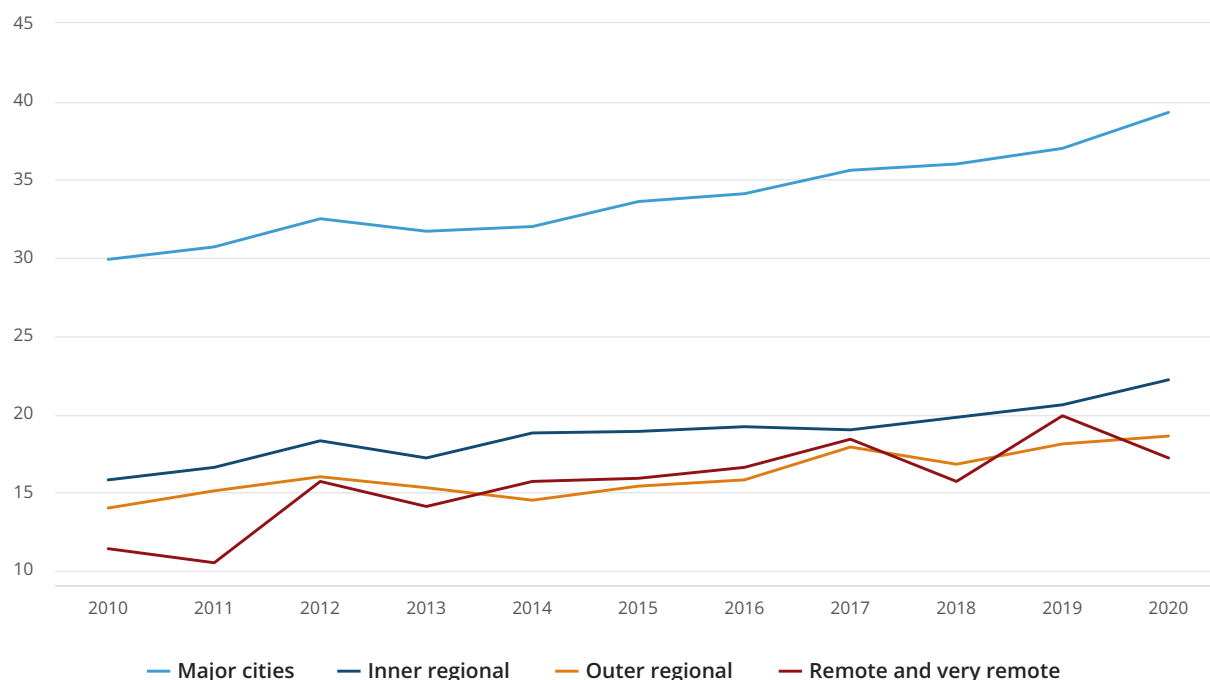
(a) All persons aged 20-64 years.

Source: Education and Work, Australia, 2020, Customised data

Levels of qualifications differed by where people lived in Australia, with fewer people in regional and remote areas having bachelor degrees or above. In May 2020, 39% of people aged 20-64 years who lived in a major city had a bachelor degree or above, compared with 22% of people in inner regional areas, 19% of those in outer regional areas, and 17% of those in remote or very remote areas of Australia.

Over the last decade, however, proportions of people with a bachelor degree or above increased across all areas.

12: Bachelor degree and above, by remoteness, 2010-2020(a)

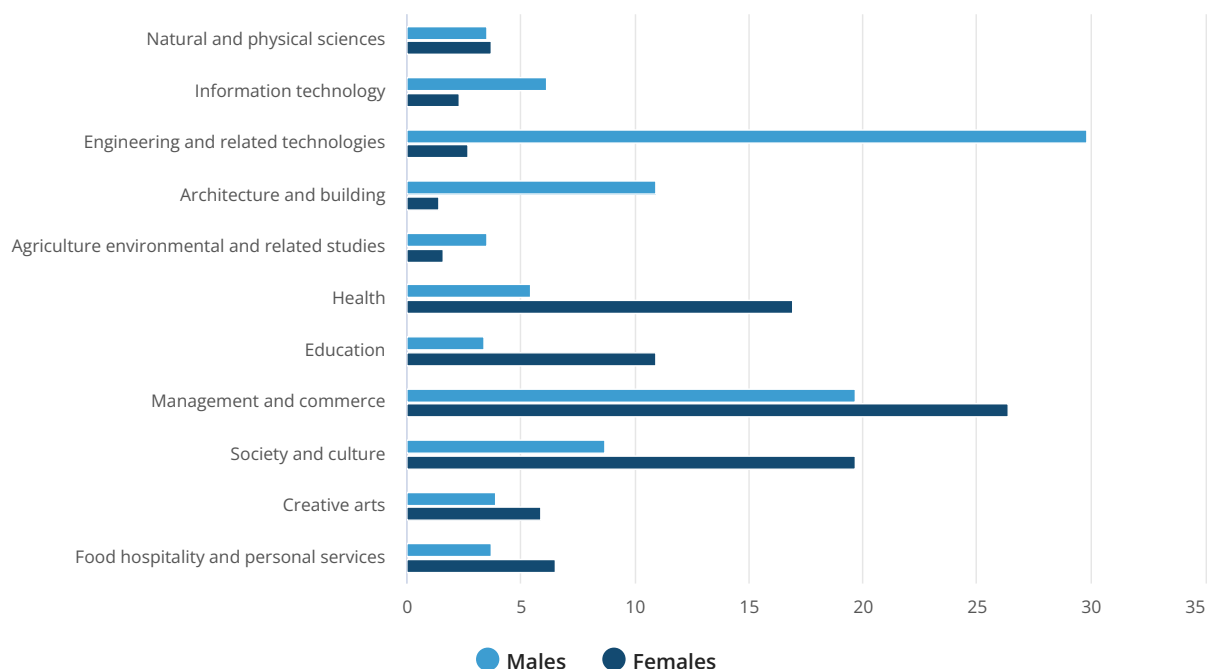


(a) All persons aged 20-64 years with a bachelor degree or above.

Source: Education and Work, Australia, 2020, Table 26

For men aged 15-74 years with a non-school qualification, the main field of study of their highest qualification was Engineering and related technologies (30%), followed by Management and commerce (20%), while for women it was Management and commerce (26%) followed by Society and culture (20%).

13: Field of study of highest non-school qualification, by sex(a)



(a) All persons aged 15-74 with a non-school qualification.

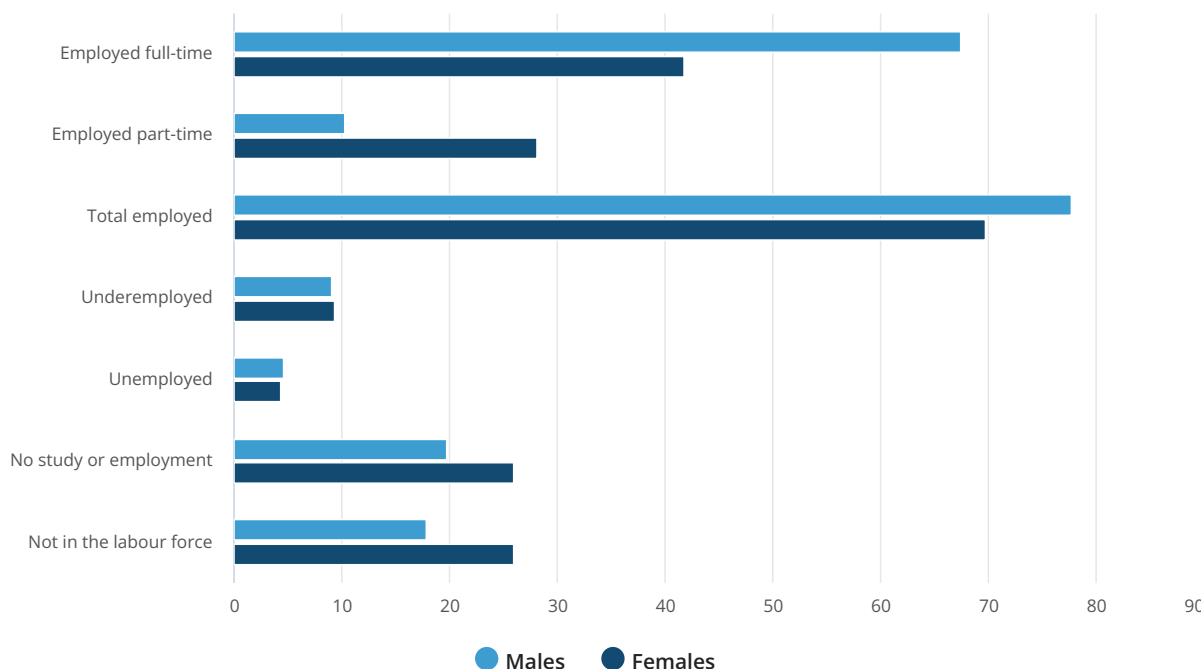
Source: Education and Work, Australia, 2020, Table 14

Non-school qualifications and employment

Employment rates were higher for people with non-school qualifications. Of people aged 15-74 years with qualifications:

- 74% were employed in May 2020, compared with 49% of those without qualifications. (In 2019 these proportions were 77% and 56% respectively.)
- More men worked full-time (67% compared with 42% of women).
- More women worked part-time (28% compared with 10% of men).
- Men and women had similar rates of underemployment (9% each), or unemployment (5% and 4% respectively).
- Women were more likely to be neither working nor studying (26% compared with 20% of men), and more likely not to be in the labour force (26% compared with 18% of men).

14: Labour force status of people with a non-school qualification, by sex(a)



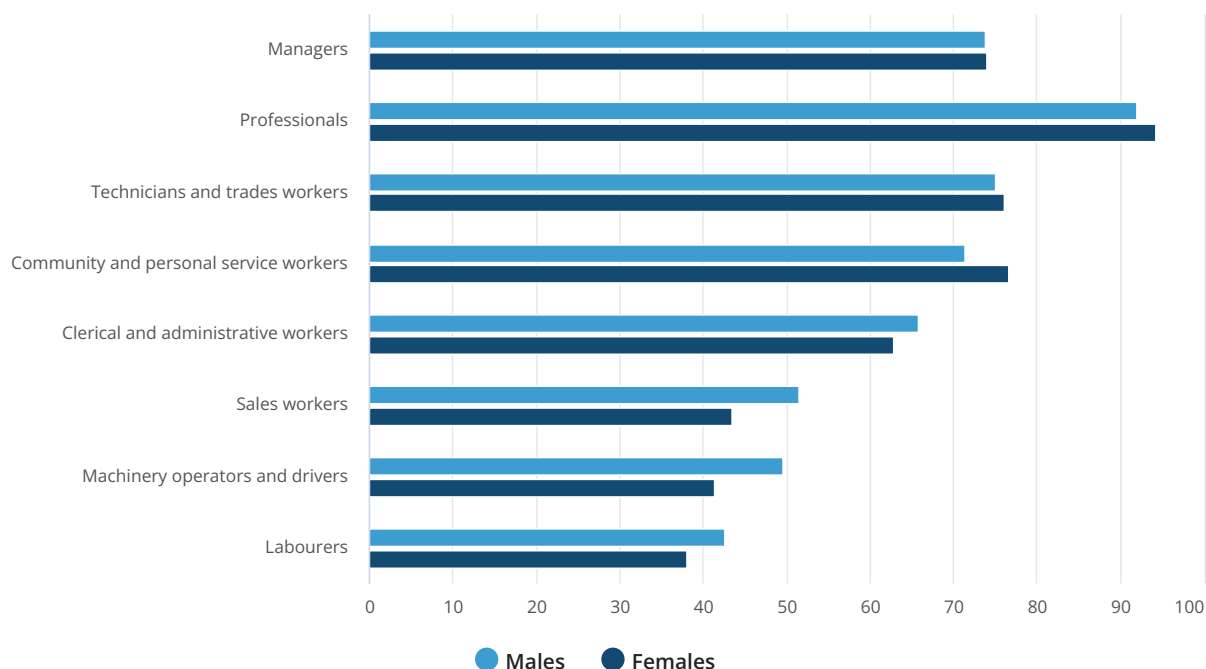
(a) All persons aged 15-74 with a non-school qualification.

Source: Education and Work, Australia, 2020, Customised data

Non-school qualifications by occupation and skill level of job

Of employed people aged 15-74, professionals were most likely to have a non-school qualification (93%), but there were a minimum of around 40% of qualified people in every occupation.

15: Non-school qualifications, by occupation and sex(a)

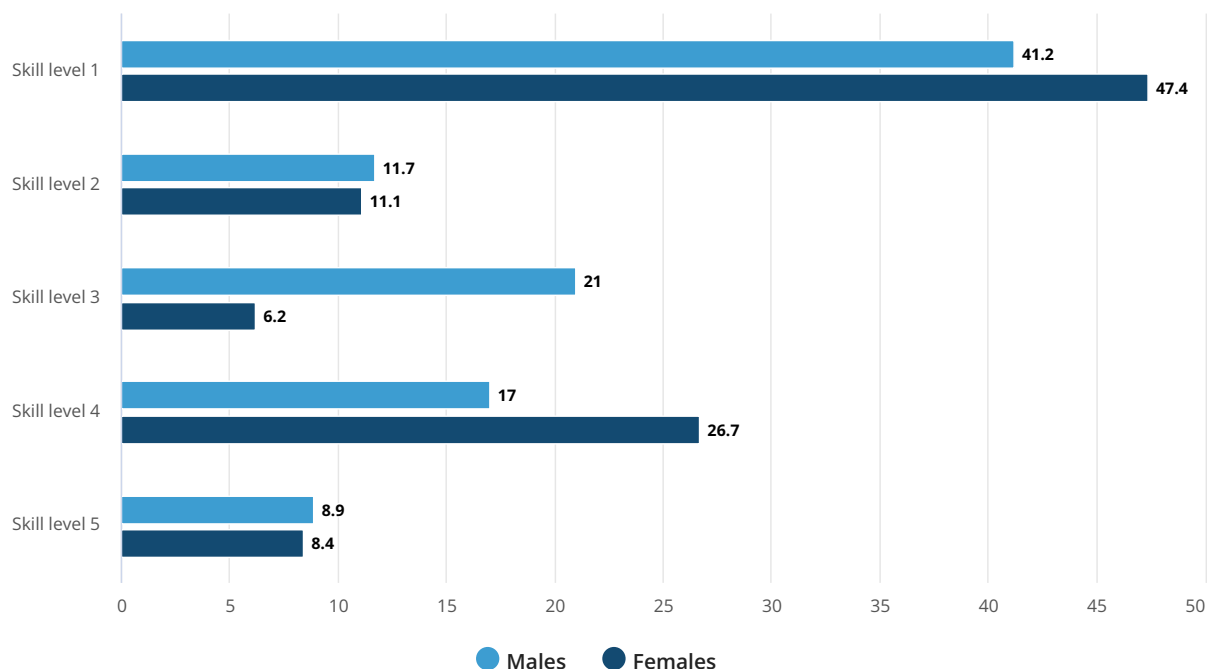


(a) Employed persons aged 15-74 years.

Source: Education and Work, Australia, 2020, Customised data

Most employed men and women aged 15-74 years with a non-school qualification (41% and 47% respectively) worked in Skill level 1 jobs (the highest skill level, including occupations such as pharmacists, architects, school principals, etc.). More men (21%) than women (6%) worked in Skill level 3 jobs (plumbers, hair dressers, butchers etc.), while more women (27%) than men (17%) worked in Skill level 4 jobs (receptionists, delivery drivers, miners, etc.).

16: Skill level of main occupation, by sex(a)(b)



(a) Employed persons aged 15-74 with a non-school qualification.

(b) For more information on skill levels, please see the Glossary.

Source: Education and Work, Australia, 2020, Customised data

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Education and work

SEW 2020 Tables 1-20, Excel Data Tables

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Table 21 Current study: Persons aged 15-64 years – 2004 to 2020, Excel Data Table

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Table 22 Current study for a non-school qualification at Certificate III level or

above: Persons aged 15-64 years – 2004 to 2020, Excel Data Table

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Table 23 With or studying towards a non-school qualification: Persons aged 20-64 years – 2004 to 2020, Excel Data Table

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Table 24 Non-school qualification: Persons aged 20-64 years – 2004 to 2020, Excel Data Table

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Table 25 Highest non-school qualification: Certificate III level or above, Persons aged 20-64 years – 2004 to 2020, Excel Data Table

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Table 26 Highest non-school qualification: Bachelor Degree level or above, Persons aged 20-64 years – 2004 to 2020, Excel Data Table

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Table 27 Non-school qualification: By age and sex, 1982 to 2020, Excel Data Table

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Table 28 Highest non-school qualification: Bachelor Degree level or above, By age and sex, 1982 to 2020, Excel Data Table

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Table 29 Educational attainment: Year 12 (or equivalent), Persons aged 15-64 years - 2004 to 2020, Excel Data Table

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Table 30 Educational attainment: Year 12 (or equivalent) or non-school qualification at Certificate II level or above, Persons aged 15-64 years – 2004 to 2020, Excel Data Table

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Table 31 Educational attainment: Year 12 (or equivalent) or non-school qualification at Certificate III level or above, Persons aged 15-64 years – 2004 to 2020, Excel Data Table

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Table 32 Fully engaged in employment or study: Persons aged 15-64 years – 2004 to 2020, Excel Data Table

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Table 33 Fully engaged in employment or study: By age, Persons not in school study aged 15-24 years – 2004 to 2020, Excel Data Table

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Table 34 Highest educational attainment: Level–By engagement in employment or study, Persons aged 15–24 years, 2004 to 2020, Excel Data Table

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Methodology

[Education and Work, Australia methodology, May 2020](#)